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Trapped sub's crew may have lost control

A Russian nuclear submarine with a crew of more than 100 is trapped on the sea bed after suffering a "malfunction".

The accident happened while on operations in the Barents Sea, a navy spokesman said in Moscow.

The 14,000-ton Oscar-class submarine, the Kursk, is not carrying any nuclear weapons, said Igor Dygalo, head of the navy press service.

The navy would not say what had gone wrong with the vessel, describing it only as a "malfunction".

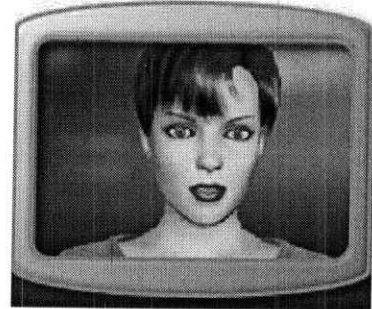
No radiation leaks have been reported and the vessel's nuclear propulsion plant has been shut down, Dygalo said.

In an emergency, a submarine would normally surface. But Dygalo said the vessel was forced to descend to the ocean floor - which indicates the crew has lost control.

Rescue ships are rushing to the area to assist the stricken submarine.

The navy did not say when the malfunction happened or where in the Barents Sea the submarine was trapped.

The Barents Sea is in arctic waters bordering the north-west



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coast of Russia and the northern tip of Norway.

With its main propulsion plant off line, it could be very difficult for vessel to move or surface.

Admiral Vyacheslav Popov, commander of the Northern Fleet, is directing the rescue operation, the Interfax news agency reports.

Dygalo said the Kursk had been taking part in major Russian navy major exercises in the Barents Sea.

Last updated: 09:24 Monday 14th August 2000.

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